



# Outlining

## Essay Development

### What is an outline?

- the first step to writing a paper
- a plan for the paper
- a tool for arranging ideas in the order they will be presented
- an overview of what the paper is going to be about

Planning takes time, but ultimately, outlining saves time by doing all of the work up front.

### How does an outline help in writing a paper?

Outlines help the writer with their topic and organization plus help save time writing the paper itself.

When outlining writers can:

- think through their topic to see if there is enough information for the paper
- determine what needs to be researched
- organize thoughts into paragraphs
- organize the paragraphs and move them around for clarity
- figure out what information needs to be added to the introduction and conclusion
- come up with good transitions

## Creating the Outline

### Step One: Brainstorm

The first step to organizing an outline is to figure out what you already know about the topic.

**Brainstorming** is a good way to get all of the ideas out of your head and onto paper in some way.



**Brainstorming** can be accomplished in any way that is comfortable for you, and many writers employ more than one brainstorming strategy.

Common brainstorming strategies include webbing, listing, freewriting, and questioning.

Reasons I like the Beach:  
 fun, theme parks, ocean air,  
 sun, pretty views, seafood,  
 swimming, salt water taffy,  
 frozen lemonade

### Step Two: Categorize

Group similar ideas together in the same paragraph. Categorizing will make the essay flow better.

ocean air  
 sun  
 pretty views

fun  
 swimming  
 theme parks


frozen lemonade  
 seafood  
 salt water taffy




## Step Three: Label and Organize

Create *main headings* and *subheadings* to add organization to the outline.

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**Main headings** (categories) are the main points within the paper.



**Subheadings** (subcategories) are supporting details and examples for the main ideas.

Always be flexible. The initial plan for the paper can change.

**Atmosphere**

- Calming atmosphere
- Pretty Views

**Fun Things to Do**

- Theme Parks
- Going to the beach

**Great Food**

- Food that can only be found at the beach
- Wonderful restaurants

## Step Four: Develop the Outline

Expand the outline to better prepare yourself for writing the paper. Formal outlines require:

- full sentences – thesis and topic sentences
- paragraph details – include support and research, as needed
- thought about what exact information will be in the final paper
- ideas about the introduction and conclusion

After you have completed the formal outline, it does not take much more to create the full essay. Add in an introduction, transition sentences, a conclusion, and citations (if needed), and the essay is complete.

## Outline Examples

Thesis: One sentence that introduces the topic and main ideas in the writing.

I. Topic Sentence: A sentence at the beginning of the paragraph stating what will be discussed.

A. Support #1

1. Detail
  - a. Example
  - b. Example
2. Detail
  - a. Support #2
  - b. Support #3

Thesis: My favorite place on earth is Myrtle Beach because of the relaxing atmosphere, fun things to do, and wonderful food to eat.

I. Myrtle Beach is the place I can go to unwind and enjoy the great outdoors.

A. Calming atmosphere

1. perfect temperatures with the sun beating down
  - a. ocean breezes
  - b. salt in the air
2. birds flying by and sound of the seagulls callings to one another